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ABSTRACT

Attracting and keeping good volunteers must be a primary concern of community college institutional advancement teams. The first of three general principles in recruiting and motivating volunteers is to establish the worthiness of the cause. This can be achieved by presenting potential volunteers with accurate financial information about the college that reflects the inadequacies of state and county funding and that compares the public institution's tax appropriations to a private college's receipts from tuition. Institutional "worthiness" should grow out a public perception of good fiscal management. Second, for volunteers to remain committed they must have a clear sense of purpose. They need to understand the mission of the college, the specific activities being asked of them, as well as the immediate and long-term objectives of the activities they will undertake. Volunteers who are alumni of the college are often the most enthusiastic and hardworking. Finally, to recruit and maintain volunteers, some important need of the volunteer must be satisfied. Volunteers may be motivated by needs stemming from altruistic concerns, desire for fantasy or fun, and interest in prestige or personal/business advancement. The college newsletter can carry a regular column featuring a volunteer and calling attention to their business or professional achievements. In addition, the college president should keep in touch with the volunteer staff and find mechanisms to recognize publicly the achievements of the volunteers. (PAA)

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Board and Volunteers

"MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS FOR THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE"

A Lecture for Newcomers and Intermediate Institutional Advancement Professionals

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Council for the Advancement and Support of Education

Advancing Two-Year Institutions Conference
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Washington, DC

JC 910 403

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Session Title: Motivating Volunteers for the Public Community College
Speaker Name: Eileen T. Farley
Date/Time: December 12, 1985 - 1:30-2:30 p.m.

OUTLINE

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF MOTIVATION

A. Worthiness of Cause Must be Established

1. Implications for Program Quality
2. Implications for Public Information Program

B. Volunteers Need Clear Sense of Purpose

1. Role in Organizational Plans
2. Immediate Objective of Volunteer's Activity
3. Ultimate Objective (Institutional Purpose)

C. Some Individual Need of Volunteer Must be Satisfied

1. Altruism
2. Fantasy
3. Fun
4. Prestige
5. Personal/Business Advantage

II. APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES: PROBLEM/REMEDY

A. Worthy Cause

1. Problem: "Tax-supported Colleges Don't Need Help"
   Remedy: Give Them the Facts (Sources of Funds, Cost Per Student)

2. Problem: "Look, Public Institutions are Mismanaged, Wasteful and Run by Politicans"
   Remedy: Be Lean, be Thrifty, be Clean

B. Clarity of Purpose

1. Problem: Community Colleges Often Misunderstood (Not "Real Colleges"; Refuge for "Losers" - "Trade Schools")
   Remedy: Use Alumni as Core;
   Give Training in College Mission;
   Give Non-alumni a "Free" Course;
   Give Them a Campus Job

C. Individual Motivation

1. Problem: Competition for Service With Other Institutions
   Remedy: Exploit Unique Appeal of Community Colleges
   a. Local Orientation
   b. "Populist" character
   c. Utilitarian Programs

2. Problem: Community College Less Prestigious
   Remedy: Create Prestige Opportunities, Show Gratitude, Give Recognition

MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS FOR THE PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Every advancement program needs volunteers, that is, unpaid people, working for the enterprise under the leadership of the chief executive officer and his/her advancement team. Public community colleges, often with too few staff in institutional advancement functions, may depend even more heavily on a strong corps of volunteers to conduct its friend-raising and fund-raising. Attracting and keeping good volunteers must be a primary concern for the community college advancement team.

How then do you get good people to help you, and how do you keep them interested in your community college? Before discussing the particular opportunities and problems confronting community colleges, a few general principles of motivation in getting and keeping volunteers should be mentioned.

The first principle is that the worthiness of your cause must be well established. Good people don't volunteer or remain committed to marginal enterprises, or to institutions whose contributions are in doubt, or whose public image is poor. This principle bears serious reflection because, obviously, it has great implications for the quality of the college's programs and management and for its program of public communication.

Secondly, to remain committed, volunteers must have a clear sense of their purpose, and this, on three different levels. First, they must know exactly what they are being asked to do (sell tickets, make contacts, lick envelopes, etc.) Then they must understand the immediate objective of these efforts (to get 30 IBM PC's for the college computer lab). And finally, of course, they need to see the relation between

the computer science lab and some aspect of the college's mission: to prepare people for jobs. You can take nothing for granted here. Your volunteers will not be effective if they can't articulate their goals right up to this level when seeking friends or funds for the college.

A third important principle in all fund-raising and friend-raising is that some important need of the volunteer must be satisfied. The psychological and social needs of people vary immensely, of course. You can find volunteers along any point of the spectrum in the hierarchy of needs. I believe that most volunteers are moved by altruistic concerns. Frequently, people whose basic social and economic needs are satisfied want to achieve more or give themselves in some additional way. Many volunteers want to cap successful business and professional careers with the respect that results from personal contributions of time, effort and resources to charity. Graduates, of course, may feel that they owe their success to the college and want to give something back. In addition to these altruistic concerns, volunteers can often satisfy other kinds of "ego" needs as well. There are lots of people out there who do not enjoy their work lives and seek opportunities to do more interesting things in their spare time. They may want to meet people of their own level of achievement, maybe even looking, in a legitimate way, for contacts to enhance their own business and professional goals. Some volunteers are simply lonely, and working for you becomes a simple and satisfying social opportunity. Colleges are often very attractive to volunteers from the business world who have long harbored fantasies of achievement in the artistic and intellectual realm. The range of possible motivations is endless. The challenge to us is to cultivate

not only a general understanding of the motivation of volunteers but in particular, to know and be sensitive to the motivation of the targeted individuals, those we want to help our cause.

With respect to these principles, community colleges present special opportunities and special problems. Our overall development strategy must take account of these if we are to attract effective volunteers who will remain productive and lively.

To people with special ties to a community college, and, generally, to our alumni, the worthiness of our cause will need no demonstration. But to those who have had no direct affiliation, or who have had no relative attend, community colleges may seem like just another tax-eating enterprise that the local politicians are taking care of and for which no volunteer effort is needed. Even worse is the common opinion in some quarters that a public agency is inevitably mismanaged and fat.

Let's examine this "worthiness" issue and see what strategies we might deploy to address it.

First and foremost, volunteers working in the advancement program need accurate financial information about the college. It might be helpful, for example, to display carefully for them the sources of your operating funds in a given year. I was even surprised myself when I first saw, at my own institution, the relatively low proportion of funds attributable to the state tax appropriation. In many community colleges across the country, students are paying a fairly high proportion of the cost of their education in the form of tuition. This should be pointed out with numbers. Sometimes it's helpful to display information on allocation of funds. When people see how much of the budget covers

"mandatory" expenses for fuel and salaries, etc., it comes home to them that you need money for student aid or faculty development. There is no budget anywhere, no matter how well subsidized the college, that can't be shown to be wanting, right? After all, adequacy of funding is always relative to your needs. If you can't think of more good things to do, you're not doing the job.

A good strategy is to try to give concrete illustrations of the vagaries of state or county funding. This might take the form of comparing several years' appropriations, for example, demonstrating how cutbacks in a given year or adjustments for inflation have had a negative impact on the academic program. One example that Bristol has used effectively is to compare the rate of increase in the College's library materials appropriation to the rate of increase in the costs of those materials. Everything related to books, processing, binding, has risen in the past decade by a substantially greater percentage than the percentage increase in our appropriation for learning materials. Thus, the quality of the College's collection is inevitably impaired if we were to rely only on the state appropriation.

Equipment replacement is another attractive example of the expense in maintaining quality in a public institution. Proving your need demands this specific education in the finances of your institution.

But finally, what a volunteer must come to understand is that the public community college is no different from a private institution in its need for private philanthropy. To strengthen this point, I like to tell people that our annual tax appropriation should be compared to the private college's annual receipts from tuition and fees. They

respectively form the core of the budget and are the base of planning and development. But, no more than a private institution could get on without adding to the core in the form of private philanthropy, can the public institution get on without additional assistance from gifts and grants.

A second "worthiness" issue that public community colleges can face in their efforts to get volunteers is that sometimes people believe that public agencies are not worth helping because they are fat and mismanaged. The antidote to this is a continuing and effective program of public information that promotes confidence in the management. If your institution is perceived as bloated with highly paid administrators or if the president is driving around in a chauffeured limo at the county's expense, then you have problems. It's important to convey a sense of thrift in your operations. These things are important, of course, for all institutions, but especially for a community college. The community in which you are situated is the same community that pays your bills in one way or another. The people expect us to be prudent and conservative. On the other hand, we have to be sure to distinguish between quality and extravagance. We need to educate the public to see that quality opportunities in education are not luxuries that somehow students attending public institutions don't deserve. It's important to make this point, but it's equally important not to be extravagant and flamboyant. A private institution, especially one with an economically or a socially elite kind of clientele, can perhaps get away with expenditures that would be viewed as frivolous in a community college. A few years back, the branch of a major urban university published a very expensive four-

color brochure at a time when the city it served was practically in receivership. It really didn't matter that the money for the brochure was obtained from a private source. It was viewed as very wasteful, and in the opinion of some, hurt the institution much more than it helped. So the balance to be struck is to be thrifty in your institutional spending habits but not cheap.

A third "worthiness" point: the college's handling of its political relationships should be respectable, if you are looking for volunteers to raise funds. Volunteers are unlikely to serve a college whose political relations are tarnished. If there's a public impression that the institution is a political boondoggle or a haven for patronage appointees of the county executive or the governor or the legislature, you'll have a problem. Now, of course, yhe president and the trustees may make the judgment that doing questionable favors for politicians will help them with their "other" fundraising programs, that is, getting a better tax appropriation. I think this is very short-run thinking. There's a long-run risk involved in getting the college too tied up in doing favors for one partisan group or another, and the harm to the image of the institution in the public eye is even greater. Politics is a shifting foundation for planning the financial resources for your institution, but integrity, quality and class will give a firm foundation. The advancement professionals may have little control over this but they have a responsibility to help the president and trustees understand what kind of public image is needed to get a strong core of community volunteers.

I spoke earlier of the importance of clarity of purpose when you're trying to marshall volunteers to help you in your advancement program.

Sometimes this is a problem for community colleges because many people misunderstand the mission of a community college. This is, perhaps, more of a problem in the eastern part of the country where community colleges are relatively new and where private institutions are the known quantity in higher education. I talk to people from time to time who betray their impression that the community college isn't a "real" college. The "open admissions" philosophy sometimes translates into an image of the college as a refuge for "losers." Still others persist in thinking of the community college as a "trade school." On the other hand, there is the especially erroneous expectation of some that the college is just like a traditional liberal arts college. These people wonder why you don't have residence halls. Volunteers must be helped to understand the real mission of the institution. When they do, you will have no trouble keeping them excited and enthusiastic.

The best strategy to address this issue is to use alumni as the vanguard of your volunteers. This is a good strategy for any institution, of course. But it is especially useful in the community college. Our alumni often feel a deep debt of gratitude to the community college because, for them, it was "the second chance," or the only educational opportunity they could afford. They feel grateful and committed. They become in themselves one of the best antidotes to any misunderstanding of the mission. They will, in effect, help the other volunteers to learn about the college.

Even if you use alumni in your volunteer organization, it is still important to provide training for your volunteers. At every meeting of your alumni council or foundation board of directors, you should pro-

vide some opportunity for members to learn something concrete about the college. Discuss briefly a new program, a job placement survey, a student success story--something to help them become immersed in the unique advantages of the community college, of your college. It's good to keep principal volunteers well informed about issues in our field. Copy relevant articles as they appear in the major media for them to help them to understand our enterprise. You should take nothing for granted.

Some other ideas: give each new volunteer a voucher for a free course at your college. If they don't want to use it themselves, they will give it to a family member or close associate, who will tell them about their experiences. You might ask new volunteers to be tutors or to work in the library or perform some other direct service. This is the kind of activity that motivates the volunteer and is useful to you. But again, it gives them a first-hand exposure to your mission and goals.

Plan a "volunteer" day on campus. Invite the foundation directors, alumni board, annual fund committee or trustees to come for the day and attend classes or give lectures in classes. This is a terrific way to reinforce the importance of your mission and <u>their</u> mission to help you. While they're there, they will talk directly with students and faculty. They will hear how long students have to wait to get computer time; they'll notice that lab equipment may be old; they will see your dental clinic, your robotics laboratory; they will get the full flavor of what the enterprise is all about. They will notice needs that a strong fund-raising program can meet.

In dealing with individual motivation, the community college has some interesting challenges. Within your service delivery areas, there are, inevitably, other major educational and charitable institutions competing for volunteers. The community hospital, private colleges, the regional state university and an array of other voluntary associations are all out there with you looking for people and money. There is tremendous competition to get the service of the best volunteers; the community college could be disadvantaged in this competition. I believe, however, that we have some unique advantages that, if exploited properly, will attract certain types of excellent volunteers.

First of all, the community college properly understood is a very "populist" institution, with a broadly appealing mission and clientele. Community college students are of every age and condition, from AFDC mothers trying to better themselves to get off welfare, to business persons returning for a crash course in computers. Students, whether young or old, work part-time. Many have families and have to struggle to balance their commitments. Certain people will be particularly "turned on" to helping such individuals get a leg up educationally, socially and economically. You don't see many community college stories about ungrateful, privileged youths having beer blasts or taking over administration buildings. The image and reality are of young people from working class or disadvantaged backgrounds working hard to better themselves, often against serious obstacles. This will have great appeal to successful business leaders in your community who may themselves have had to struggle against disadvantages.

The local character and orientation of the community college also makes it an immensely appealing cause. Here community colleges have

a tremendous advantage over baccalaureate and private institutions. Community colleges are really preparing people for life and work right in that community. The nurses you graduate are working in the community hospital; and the electro-mechanical technicians are going in to the computer plant; and the word-processing students are going to work in the local insurance companies; and criminal justice students are getting jobs in the county courts and in the local police departments. You are helping local employers to prosper economically. The friends and neighbors of your targeted volunteers are benefitting from the college every day. This advantage must be pressed when you are looking to get and keep good volunteers.

The prestige motivation needs careful analysis. Let it be said at the outset that any volunteer who is in it solely for the prestige is not someone you want working for you. But, as with most things in life, people have mixed motives for what they do. An individual might well be influenced, consciously or not, by the degree to which a charity will enhance his personal or business prestige. The public image of your institution weighs heavily here. We've talked earlier about that. But assuming that front is covered, then you want to consider how you can get people in your community competing for the honor of serving your community college. How do you do that?

A fundamental principle of organizing volunteers is that highly respected and talented people attract other highly respected and talented people. Important community leaders attract other important community leaders and those who aspire to be important community leaders. Therefore, you cannot spend too much thought, time, and energy on the early

volunteers. If you can get a prominent, competent person to chair your annual fund campaign, you'll have no trouble getting others.

The college should create opportunities for recognition and prestige. Here is an area where you can put your political ties to good use. When the governor comes to your campus, be sure you get maximum use of "photo opportunities." Even the most blasé sophisticated types like to get their picture taken with the governor. Get your county executive or mayor to send an appreciative letter at the end of an annual fund campaign, recognizing their contribution. Congresspeople and senators have large staffs always ready to send a congratulatory telegram to be read at a public gathering. Get your volunteers to help lobby for your appropriation. They will be delighted to call the governor or legislators in your behalf--and will feel important and recognized while doing it.

Don't neglect your volunteer's "real life" achievements, either. Maybe your college newsletter could carry a regular column, featuring a volunteer, calling attention to their business or professional achievements.

Occasional "exclusive" social occasions can be motivating to volunteers. The best situation is to have other volunteers sponsor such occasions at their homes. The objective is to add a touch of glamour and sociability to the work of the volunteers. This touch should be a light one, but carefully planned in your overall strategy.

Most community colleges have some kind of awards program. Our institution has a "Volunteer of the Year" award. The college trustees also give an annual award at commencement, not necessarily to a volunteer, but the potential for such opportunities to recognize successful volunteers should not be lost.

Finally, the college president holds an awesome office. Because I am one, I'm always slightly surprised at the satisfaction people display when I'm attentive to them. So be sure your president keeps in touch with your volunteers, having a dinner with key volunteers from time to time, reporting to them about college events, sending thank you's in writing, phoning thank you's, thanking them on public occasions, and thanking them again. You get the message.

To sum up, I believe that despite the competition and the relatively recent development of community colleges' participation in the quest for private philanthropy, there are many people just waiting to be asked to help us. If you plan it right, you will have more volunteers than you can handle from your community. Their enthusiastic commitment to your institution will result in an ever-expanding circle of friends and, over time, in a strong, reliable source of additional financial resources.

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